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THOUGHTS ON ARTISTIC EDUCATION

RELATION TO INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT.

BY W. J. STILLMAN.

PLATO summed up the principles of the true system of education, by saying that all children should be taught—first, gymnastics; second, art; and, lastly, pure science. Let us briefly regard the sequences in this maxim, for I am persuaded that a correct appreciation and acceptance of it would revolutionize our present conditions of mutual existence—would, in fact, supplant the aims with which we now live, and for which we now labor, by nobler, more satisfactory, and more enduring objects of devotion and sources of delight. I would not have it believed, for a moment, that Plato was so short-sighted as to consider physical development the chief good in life; his meaning of the word gymnastics was more extended and elevated than that which we at this day entertain, and if I may offer myself as an interpreter of the words of the wisest and best beloved of the children of Minerva, I would ask permission to expound this dark saying. It is a well-known physiological fact, that children reared in total deprivation of sunlight become in a measure idiotic—the light of reason waning without the glow of the light of day. The reason is evident—for a perfectly healthy mind a healthy body is requisite; a diseased and feeble physical organization can never sustain and second the vigorous and normal exertion of intellect. In the wide world of Nature spread around us, there is an infinity of influences and agents intended, doubtless, by the Creator, to become the means by which our minds shall be educated to healthy perception, and sustained in healthy and effective reflection; the sun itself, type of the divine Wisdom, which illuminates all things; the pleasant winds; the fresh air of the morning on the mountain side, and even the soft and springy cushion of the turf, yielding in its dewiness to the feet of men weary of city pavements; the silence of forest-glades, and the laving coolness of the wave, which parts at the stroke of the bold swimmer—all these give a pure and noble delight to healthily constituted minds, a delight which enters into, and mingles completely with, all the intellectual and spiritual joys and pleasures of the individual. I will not dwell on the familiar theme of the harmonizing influences of Nature; we all know that evil passions and base motives have no origin or sustenance in the realm of bird-songs and flower-blooms: the point to which I would particularly

call attention is the law that to the full appreciation and enjoyment of these messages from what we call the inanimate world (as if anything could be inanimate in which Deity dwells), a certain physical education is essential, and this education consists in the perfect development of every faculty by which we receive material impressions, or, as we ordinarily call them—sensations. To sharpen the eye-sight, to open the hearing, to learn to love the fragrance of the pine-grove, the hay-field, and the rose, more than the concoctions of the perfumer; the flavor of the strawberry, and of the luscious burden of the vine, rather than the artificial compounds of the Gallic cuisine; and even to develop the sense of touch so that we shall love the tread of our feet on the turf rather than on carpets of the East, and prize a couch of heather more than the enervating cushions of down; the invigorating kisses of the winds of the sunrise hour more than the sheltering but enfeebling warmth of heated drawing-rooms: these things, I would say, are the objects to be attained by the true gymnastic education. I do not associate for a moment with Plato's gymnasium, the idea of an amphitheatre, where swinging-ropes, leaping-poles, and a race-course, dumb-bells and spring-boards are used to develop the muscular organization of men, and increase their brute force. His gymnastic school was in the fields and on the hill-side, where we may greet the first sun-light, in the groves where we may rest from the heat of the noon-day amidst the murmur of the wind-stirred leaves, where, in brief, we may give to every sense its appropriate sensation, and feed it with the pabulum Nature has provided, nourishing it at once into health and activity. Man is a compound of sense, science, and inspiration—he is all three, and while he remains on the earth must remain all three, or suffer the penalty of a disordered and unhealthy, because unequally developed, being. If he sacrifices his thinking and spiritual elements to his animalism, he becomes a brute; if he devotes himself purely to his intellect, he becomes a negation, a cold abstraction; and if he strives to become a pure spirit only, he leaves the ground God placed him on, for the clouds, for which he has not yet received his wings, and where he must maintain his elevation by the most painful exertions and unnatural sacrifices. Let us first of all be healthy, and, as far as in us lies, happy animals, enjoying with at least as great intensity as the brutes themselves, our physical gifts; then let us philosophize and idealize tranquilly and normally, and so, taking earthly existence contentedly and serenely while it is continued to us, finally take heaven, not by

storm, as the ascetics and eremites would do, but as beings fulfilling the perfect law of their organization; first good and true men and women; then calm and earnest philosophers; and at last, by the law of divine progress, and having preserved all of immortal value in the primary stages of life, enter heaven neither halt or blind. This was the spirit of the Greek philosophy; and, ignorant as the Greeks were of immortality and its hopes, they occupied this world more rationally and happily than we at this day do. This was the high meaning of Plato's maxim; and as our physical powers are the basis of all education, it is essential that we should, first of all, give to those whose education we control, and to ourselves as far as it is possible to retrieve former errors, a pure physical training under the influences of nature, that every sense and feeling may become prepared to do its part in the subsequent development of the individual. Give the child to the sun and the open sky; let him ravage the fields of their floral treasures, and while the sunlight browns his brow it will kindle in his soul; and while the sky gives his lungs a healthy respiration, it would give his heart openness and truth; and the flowers his young instincts give a more than golden value to, will transfer their bloom and beauty to his spirit; and thus, while developing his physique, he is gathering the germs of future art and philosophy. It would be well if we all could make children of ourselves, and recommence our own education, or at least those of us who have not followed this order; and so, by the development of a perfect animalism, lay the foundations of a perfect art, philosophy, and spirituality. I believe that man combines the attributes of all brutes, and that each attribute has an essential function for him, so that we err very greatly in considering them evidences of low organization or organic vices. The lion's ferocity and love of domination, the stealthiness of the fox, the pride of the eagle, are not vices but virtues in them, and if possessed by us only become vices when perverted, and when they obtain greater power over us than the higher virtues. Who would not with pride be a lion for the truth and liberty, a fox to attain justice for his fellow men, or like an eagle, look with clear and unwinking vision down into the haunts of lower life. To have the powers of all brutes, but to use them nobly—that is the true human animalism—to be a lion when occasion demands, and a lamb when one may; to have the capacities of enjoyment of each and all, is our right by creation. Our gymnasium is large—for one time we have quiet walks, for another the ardent chase; and no part of the gymnastic system is so misunderstood as that which comes under the general term of field sports.

It seems to me a mistaken morality which condemns, as barbarous, angling and hunting, and I am well assured that it is entirely an error to attribute the pleasure we find in them to a mere destructiveness, or to a delight in the pangs of our inferior fellow animals. There is in them scarcely nothing in common with those really savage amuse-

ments men find in the combats of animals—cock-fighting, dog-fighting, and the like. I can speak from experience, and can, with any genuine and enthusiastic sportsman, declare there is no occupation so well calculated to promote a healthy and vigorous animalism, as angling and shooting; yet I find no delight in the pangs of a dying trout, or the last struggles of a buck when the unerring rifle-ball has stopped the course of his brief life. If I should find a fish, gasping on the stream's brink I should hasten to restore him, most tenderly, to his native element; or should I have found a deer struggling with ferocious wolves, my rifle would have restored him to liberty; though in the former case I should throw my fly with my best skill to lure my finny brother into my basket, and in the latter I should have drawn my finest sight on the deer in his next course. If we have those destructive instincts, which are also given to the brute, why is it, save for some use they may be of to us in our education, and shall we deny them because the brutes also have them? I know well that sometimes, with some men, they do become barbarous and blood-thirsty; but I know, too, that in my intercourse with hunters, I have found few men more gentle and tender-hearted in all that pertains to the suffering of misfortune, though the sight of a noble buck taking to water would rouse the highest enthusiasm they were capable of, while they would feel only pity for the tender fawn which their over eager haste had dismissed from life. I have been obliged to turn away my eyes from seeing the death of a deer under the knife, though I wanted the venison; yet felt every nerve thrill with excitement as my finger touched my rifle's trigger with a six-year-old buck before me, and felt no pain as the proud head wilted down under the fatal shot. 'Tis true that Wordsworth charges us "never to make our pleasure or our pride, in sorrow of the meanest thing that lives;" but Wordsworth was a devoted trout-fisherman nevertheless; and I know of no purer or gentler lover of nature than old Izaak Walton, though angling was his chief delight. It seems a strange riddle, but I have my own solution of it, which, fanciful as it may appear, I firmly believe. There is something in the consciousness of skill and power; but that is not all, for one feels no excitement in firing at a target, or casting a fly for chubs—there must be nobility and beauty in the prey; there is no satisfaction in shooting hedge-hogs, or catching cat-fish. The secret of it seems to me in this, that we appropriate spiritually something of the admirable qualities of our victims, and so feed in ourselves the animal virtues which we find in them.

I recall the story of Richard Cœur de Lion, who, compelled to fight bare-handed with a lion, met him on the spring, and thrusting his hand down his throat, tore out his heart, and ever after men called Richard the lion-hearted. And that was true and full of meaning; and they did right to call him Cœur de Lion, for he had won the heart of the kingly beast. I have read somewhere a story of a prince who possessed an enchanted sword, which had this virtue, that the wearer added the strength

of all the men he conquered to his own, and the tale, idle and fanciful as it may seem, has its significance, for we are stronger by whatever strong thing we have overpowered. Do not suppose that an angler, when he has struck a trout of size, which demands his utmost skill, and arouses, by its energy and cunning, his highest enthusiasm, feels for an instant that the creature is in pain, or that his desperate struggles are only natural efforts to regain his freedom, much less that he exults in that pain, or envies him his freedom. No, that is lost entirely in a rivalry of powers, —he with his silken thread and foolish fly working, out of his own element, against the wily fish at home, and with every advantage nature gave him, so as in a measure to equalize the chances of success. They are contending, and the nobler the fish, the more active and wily, the keener is the interest felt by the angler, for no generous man loves a weak or lazy foe. And when at last the conquered trout gives up the contest, the man is elate with pride, for he has, coming down to the level of his animal nature, met an antagonist on his own terms and triumphed, and has added the activity and grace of his prey to his own animalism, and, to make a paradox, being no less a man than he was before, he is more of an animal.

These things are all part of the province of man—to conquer, to subdue the brute creation, for in no other way can all his brute attributes be developed; and this too is part of the great gymnastic development which forms the first step in Plato's system of education.

Pure, correct, and refined sensation is the basis on which we must build all our philosophy, and more especially, if there can be here any degrees, all our Art. But after the child has begun to feel clearly, when all his sensations have received their normal life and quickening, and he passes on to that stage at which he begins to receive emotions, poetry, music, the perception of beauty in the external world, all things beautiful and harmonious, come to him by these quickened sensations, bringing the joy, and love, and enthusiasm, the expression of which becomes Art in its diverse forms. Hence it was that Plato said, that the child must next be taught Art, because Art is emotion, and its study must be enforced before the more sordid desires and fiery passions have begun to develop themselves, and drown by their clamorous voices the gentler, happier songs of the tranquil heart—before the activity of the intellect, with its pride and ambition, make pure emotion seem tame and vapid. The true artist is that one on whom the emotions of beauty and harmony have taken so strong a hold in his childhood—

"That neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon

Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain winds be free,
To blow against thee; and in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh, then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations."

The education of the artist must begin with the first awakening of those emotions, which are the subjects of Art—and, most of all, does this education consist in directing those emotions—in leading the poetic sympathies into action. After that, when the intellect begins its work, it will reduce, refine, and reproduce those emotions in the forms of Art, but if these things shall be neglected in the spring time of life, there is no hope to bring them back in manhood. In all that is beautiful, and harmonious, and heavenly, "the child is father of the man." There is no more common mistake in estimating the artistic talent of children, and their promise of success as artists, than that of judging by their facility of imitation and fondness for mere drawing,—it is the force of emotion before Nature and poetic feeling of which they show evidence, which is the index of their future greatness. The child who loves solitude and the banks of running brooks, with the quiet and seclusion of forest groves, who finds in the inanimate world a charm which lures him from the sports and games of his more boisterous companions, and whom Nature can—

"So impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts,"

that he shall prefer the murmuring of pine groves to the excitements of city life—that child, I say, has the germs of Art in him, whether or not he ever astonished parents and schoolmasters with his precocious ideals. The soul of poetry is also the soul of Art—they are two forms of the same essence—peculiarities of education and circumstance, perhaps, determining whether one will be a poet or an artist, the force of emotion and the fullness of the sentiment of Beauty being the measure of his essential greatness in either calling.

This being the case, we may see at once the importance of this gymnastic training which I have treated of, and the necessity of educating the young artist's heart before and above his head or his hand—these latter are necessary, but, "out of the heart are the issues of life," says the Book, and truly all vitality of Art or poetry comes from that inmost source. The purpose of our physical development, I said, was pre-eminently to arrive at full and per-

fect sensation, for the sentiment of Nature is derived directly from this sensation, and *sentiment* is the soul of Art. It is true that the greatest painter *will inevitably be the one who sees most in Nature*, but he who sees only the external forms has the eyes of the body alone open. The visual organ will take in the images of many objects which are not recognized by the mind or retained in the memory, because their sentiment was not awakened when they were seen. If, then, I might use a transcendentalism, I should say that sentiment was the sensation of the soul, mere vision being of the bodily organ.

Therefore, having by our gymnastics perfected every physical sense, we come next to the full enjoyment of the use of those senses and sensations—to the cultivation of our perceptive faculties; and we cannot be said to have perceived anything fully until its meaning also is accepted—its inner and essential nature felt.

And to develop this power of deepest and clearest perception is the end of Art, as the capacity is the first requisite for an artist. Does any one dream that Art has no other purpose than to produce perishable works, to give form to marble, or color to canvas, when both marble and canvas must decay, while the human soul is yet on the threshold of life! No! the great work of Art is within ourselves, to teach us as artists, to see the universe and its mysteries, to fathom and grasp the harmonies of the Eternal Beauty, to foster the

"Sense sublime
Of something, far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

All that we make shall have an end, but that which we become shall endure for ever—we are artists, not for Art, but for ourselves, and now we find the importance of Plato's order of education—first, being men, that we may find the right physical enjoyment of everything; then artists, that we may perceive the true appearances of all things, and feel their poetic meanings; then philosophers, that we may learn the reason of everything; passing through the threefold action of sensation, perception, and reflection, and so shall we be perfect men and women, and prepared for a more exalted state of existence. We may understand, therefore, that it is important that we consider Art not as a thing to be practised by the few for the many, but by each one of all for himself, though there will inevitably be some who, having greater original capacity for the study, will be called artists *par excellence*, and these will always be the teachers of their more tardy and less perceptive fellow-men, being those who see most deeply into the truth of Nature. When, therefore, I speak of the artist, I do not mean one who follows Art as a sole occu-

pation, but every person who has a love of beauty, and the capacity to perceive it in Nature, for all such are artists in the degree of their love and capacity. Whatever relation may exist between conception and execution, it is in the thought—the *idea*—that we find the artist, and by its value that we stamp him. Get the ideas—have the Art in you, and whether you ever put it on canvas is a minor matter—if you cannot say with Correggio, "I, too, am a painter," you may say a better thing than that—I, too, am an artist—for the Artist is deeper, and higher, and broader, than the painter.

A SKETCH OF LONDON LIFE.

It is nine o'clock in the morning. This is the time for an immense daily emigration from Western to Eastern London—one set of emigrants is packed off in omnibuses, carriages, cabs, and hansoms along Regent street and the Strand, and another along Oxford street and Holborn, while a third troupe of performers on the eastern stage is landed by steamboats at the foot of Westminster, Blackfriars, and London Bridges. Talk of the emigration of Huns to Rome, or of Irish to New York! It is all nonsense. Look at this daily rush of millions from one part of a city to another, and if you are not altogether dead to enthusiasm, let us remind you that here is an excellent opportunity to make an investment of some of this exhilarating commodity. It is something wonderful. We lodged for eight years in the midst of this whirlpool of excitement, and, like Niagara, London grew upon us the more we saw of it. But of all the fascinations of that huge city, none struck us so powerfully as the daily rush from the west to the east, and a business day in this busy city.

No wonder that the English are so instinct with common sense. One day in the city is enough to cure all dyspepsias, and to make one curse all metaphysics. Here is glorious cosmopolitan humanity—but a gentlemanly cosmopolitanity. Alexandria and Tyre, Venice, Genoa, and the Hanse towns, with Byzante, Smyrna, and Amsterdam, huddled together in a three-penny omnibus *pêle-mêle* with England, Scotland, and Wales, a fair sprinkling of the United States, the West Indies, and Brazil, together with Pekin and Bombay—all rushing to "the Bank."

At the Bank of England, or at the head of Cheapside, in front of the Mansion House, most of the omnibuses stop, and universal commerce leaps out in the shape of quiet and gentlemanly looking men, most of them preserving an air of cheerful repose in the midst of chaotic excitement, and walking off with singular composure to their respective offices. Many of them come from sumptuous residences; they are the heads or partners of the firm. Another tide rushes in from Islington, Clity Road, and other less costly localities; they are clerks and book-keepers. A third tide comes in from the small streets and lanes clustering around Thames street, and Bishopsgate,